

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TO SECSTATE WZSHDC 2716

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NIAROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 0391

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SO, UR

SUBJECT: SOMALIA'S FEUD WITH BBC REGARDING SOVIET INFLUENCE

REF: A) MOGADISCIO 0338 B) LONDON 3616 C) MOGADISCIO 0368

D) MOGADISCIO 0371

BEGIN SUMMARY

1. BBC BROADCASTS ON SOVIET INFLUENCE IN SOMALIA (REF A) HAVE STRUCK PAINFUL NERVE IN MOGADISCIO. SOMALI RADIO AND PRESS HAVE LASHED OUT AGAINST BBC AND IMPERIALIST MEDIA WITH FLURRY OF COUNTERPUNCHES WHICH ARE SENT OUT DAILY IN MEDIA. BBC HAS SNIPED BACK, DRAWING FURTHER ON CROZIER STUDY, BUT ALSO TEMPERING ITS COMMENTARY WITH LESS NEGATIVE REPORTS ON SOMALI SITUATION. SIAD GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY VERY ANGRY AT BBC PUBLICITY WHICH AGAIN PINPOINTS SIGNS OF SOVIET SATELLIZATION OF SOMALIA AT TIME WHEN GSDR THOUGHT WORLD FOCUS ON SOVIET BASE ISSUE AND 1974 SOVIET/SOMALI TREATY HAD DIMMED. WE SUSPECT THAT CROZIER STUDY, IF WIDELY READ IN AFRICAN AND ARAB DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES, MIGHT EVEN BE MORE DAMAGING TO IMAGE WHICH SIAD AND GSDR HAVE BEEN PROMOTING. WE INFORMED THAT MOST OF SOMALI SIDEWALK AUDIENCES BELIEVE BBC

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REPORTS REGARDING SOVIET INFLUENCE ARE ACCURATE. WE ALSO

UNDERSTAND THAT SOVIET ADVISORS AGAIN LYING LOW AND STAYING OFF STREETS IN MOGADISCIO UNTIL BBC FUROR ABATES. END SUMMARY

2. SOMALI MEDIA LAUNCHED IMMEDIATE ATTACK AGAINST BBC FOLLOWING LATTER'S MARCH 5 COMMENTARY ON BRIAN CROZIER'S STUDY QTE SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA UNQTE WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN FEB. IN UK BY INSTITUTE FOR STUDY OF CONFLICT. (BRITISH EMBASSY HERE HAS PROVIDED US WITH COPY OF CROZIER PAPER) BBC BROADCASTS CITED MOST PUNISHING ALLEGATIONS OF CROZIER STUDY, INCLUDING KGB PRESENCE, NUMBERS OF SOVIET ADVISORS IN SOMALIA, MILITARY DELIVERIES, INCLUDING SAM-2 MISSILES, SOVIET NAVAL AND AIRFIELD RIGHTS, ETC. WHAT BBC RADIO BROADCASTS WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE AUDIENCES WAS WEALTH OF INCIDENTAL DETAIL IN CROZIER STUDY WHICH IS MOST PERSUASIVE PART OF HIS DOCUMENTATION.

3. EXTENSIVE SOMALI COUNTERATTACK AGAINST BBC TO DATE INDICATES THAT BBC REPORTS HAVE DRAWN BLOOD IN SOMALIA. GSDR REACTION HAS CONSISTED OF DIRECT ATTACKS BY RADIO MOGADISCIO ON BBC, ITS EXPATRIATE STAFF AND ITS COLONIALIST MENTALITY, WHICH HAS WORKED AGAINST SOMALIA AND OTHER EMERGING NATIONS AS IMPERIALIST MOUTHPIECE FOR YEARS. RADIO MOGADISCIO ATTACKS BEGAN ON MARCH AND

HAVE CONTINUED ON ALMOST DAILY BASIS SINCE THAT TIME. RADIO ASSAULTS HAVE URGED SOMALI CITIZENS NOT TO LISTEN TO BBC BUT TO DATE WE HAVE SEEN NO ATTEMPT TO REDUCE SIZE OF BBC SIDEWALK AUDIENCES AT 1730 HOURS DAILY.

4. OFFICIAL LANGUAGE DAILY OKTOBER STAR HAS ALSO ATTACKED BBC AND WESTERN MEDIA WITH EQUAL VIGOR BUT, UNLIKE RADIO MOGADISCIO, HAS TAKEN IDEOLOGICAL HIGH ROAD IN COUNTERING CHARGES OF SOVIET INFLUENCE. OKTOBER STAR COMMENTARY MORE CONSISTENTLY PUTS BBC COMMENTARY IN CONTEXT OF WORLD STRUGGLE BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE AND IMPERIALIST FOUVQS. DESTRUCTIVENESS OF MODERN WEAPONRY HAS MADE ARMED STRUGGLE IMPOSSIBLE BUT QTE CONFLICT OF CLASSES UNQTE CONTINUES NEVERTHELESS AND BBC ASSAULT ON SOMALIA IS PART OF THE FIGHT (MOGADISCIO 368). OKTOBER STAR EDITORIAL COMMENTARY THUS SIMILAR IN CONTENT TO SOVIET ATTACKS AGAINST USIA, FOR EXAMPLE, AS REFLECTED IN PRAVDA'S FEB. 22 ARTICLE ON QTE SABOTEURS AT THE MICROPHONES UNQTE. IF BBC INTENT WAS TO REVEAL IN PART THE WOLF THAT LIES BENEATH THE SHEEP'S

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CLOTHING IN SOMALIA, THEN SEVERAL OKTOBER STAR EDITORIALS SUGGEST THAT SOME OF TIME IT'S THE WOLF THAT'S BEEN BARKING BACK.

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5. WHILE RADIO MOGADISCIO HAS STATED FLATLY THAT BBC IS AN INSTRUMENT OF HMG AND USED TO QTE COLPLNIALIZE UNQTE AFRICA, ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA. AS YET, HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND GSDR HAS NOT PROTESTED TO HJG. APART FROM MEDIA, ONLY OFFICIAL REACTION WE AWARE OF TO DATE WAS EXTEMPORANEOUS BLAST DURING WOMAN'S DAY CELEBRATION ON MARCH 9 BY PRESIDENT SIAD. HIS ANGER WAS DIRECTED AGAINST QTE COLONIALISTS: YOU'RE DEAD* YOU'RE FINISHED* SO WHAT TO YOU WANT?W EVERY DAY YOU BEATPTHE DRUMS, EVERY DAY YOU'RE CREATING CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO DON'T NEED YOUR ADVICE. WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT? WASN'T IT YOU WHO DIVIDED AFRICA WHO OPPRESSED THE AFRICANS, THE ASIANS, AND THE LATIN AMERICANS? UNQTE.

6. WE BELIEVE GSDR REACTION TO BBC COMMENTARY REFLECTS IN LARGE PART ITS CONCERN THAT CHARGES OF SOVIET SATELLIZATION OF SOMALIA AGAIN SURFACING IN WESTERN MEDIA AT A TIME WHEN DOUBTS ABOUT NATURE OF SOMALI/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP HAD BEEN ABATING -- AT LEAST, IN PUBLIC. WE BELIEVE GSDR'S BASIC CONCERN IS ARAB AND AFRICAN PERCEPTION OF THEIR SOVIET ENTANGLEMENTS. BBC COMMENTARY, AND CROZIER STUDY, HAVE ADDED FRESH FUEL TO FIRE

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WHICH HAS BEEN LESS VISIBLE THESE PAST MONTHS -- EXCEPT IN MORE SKEPTICAL ARADCAPITALS, LIKE JIDDA. SIAD 1974 TOUR OF CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES, UNDERTAKEN AFTER UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY GIVEN SOVIET BASES ISSUE AND SOMALI/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY IN MID-1974, PROBABLY ACHIEVED SOME POSITIVE RESULTS IN AFRICA. WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY GIVEN CROZIER CHARGES WOULD MEAN SIAD MIGHT HAVE TO FIGHT THAT BATTLE AGAIN AT TIME WHEN HIS ROLE AS OAU CHAIRMAN NOW DRAWING TO CLOSE. ALSO, THIS FRESH OUTBREAK OF PUBLICITY COMES AT TIME WHEN GSDR STILL HOPING -- UNREALISTICALLY WE THINK -- FOR SIZABLE FLOW OF ARAB FUNDING TO HELP IN DROUGHT RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION.

7. SEVERAL WESTERN NEWSMEN ARRIVED IN MOGADISCIO ON HEELS OF BBC DAROR AND GSDR MADE UNUSUAL EFFORT TO POLISH UP ITS IMAGE. NEWSMEN INCLUDED TOM JOHNSON OF NY TIMES, JAS MACMANNUS OF MANCHESTER GUARDIAN (JOHNSON TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO GET TO BERBERA, FROM WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ALL FOREIGNERS NOW EXCLUDED). BOTH MEN TALKED TO SOVIET EMBASSY, WHOSE SPOKESMAN DENIED BBC FIGURES OF 4,000 SOVIET ADVISORS BUT DID STATE THAT THERE MIGHT BE 1,000 SOVIET ADVISORS IN SOMALIA, NOT INCLUDING FAMILY MEMBERS. THIS

IS RATHER SURPRISING STATISTICAL CONCESSION AND IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH ADDITIONAL ARITHMETIC TO PUSH THAT FIGURE OVER 2,000 AT MINIMUM. (FYI WE AVOIDED NUMBERS GAME IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH MEN. END FYI)

8. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE REACTION OF SOMALI RADIO LISTENER TO GSDR/BBC RUNNING FEUD, REPORTEDLY MOST ACCEPT BBC'S BASIC PREMISE OF SUBSTANTIAL SOVIET INFLUENCE IN SOMALIA. SOVIET ADVISORS IN MEANTIME HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS CONSPICUOUS ON MOGADISCIO STREETS AND SOME REPORTS INDICATE THAT SOVIET COMMUNITY HAS BEEN TOLD TO LIE LOW. THIS MAY BE TO AVOID INCIDENTS OR SIMPLY DISCOURAGE VISITING WESTERN NEWSMEN DRAWING UNFAVORABLE CONCLUSIONS, EITHER IMPRESSIONISTICALLY OR BY COUNTING NOSES. NEITHER WOULD HELP THE GSDR IN ITS FIGHT WITH THE WESTERN MEDIA.
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